

Sunday, August 21, 2011
10:37 AM

DE on real problems of command and control

(Partridge Report: nov. 19, 1961: Gen. Earle E. Partridge, first commander of NORAD, brought back from retirement for Partridge Report on National Command and Control)

“Real reason” (according to my USAF friends?) for lack of any physical controls on weapons and vehicles: to keep the president (advised or influenced or even supplanted by any of his inexperienced and lily-livered civilian advisors, or the Secretary of Defense, surrounded by his civilian assistant directors and their civilian staffs) from blocking or refusing to authorize a GO order for the general war plans (or use of nuclear weapons in a limited war), or from issuing a STOP or RETURN order (if either had existed): thereby fucking up the operation, or missing the opportunity to disarm the Soviets (and inviting a Soviet attack on a disorganized and paralyzed US strategic system).

Exactly equivalent to the fear of the Russian General Staff that the Czar would delay or refuse to give an order for general mobilization (the only mobilization plan that existed, or was possible); or, as he was tempted to do (appropriately in the circumstances of supporting the Serbs being attack by Austria, not by Germany: the only way to avoid World War I) ordering mobilization only against Austria (not really possible, and if tried, leaving Russia totally vulnerable to attack by Germany).

(Note the problem of the time-interval necessary for mobilizations by different parties; and the problem of communicating changes (vs. “mobilize”); and the intricacy of coordinating train arrivals and departures...and the extreme cost of mobilization: and no plans for limited mobilization (a factor in deterring French mobilization at the time of Hitler’s occupation of the Rhineland: this was related to the problem we saw—even HAK, as well as RAND—of having only general war plans for the defense of Europe, vs. “flexible response” : the lack of limited war plans: leading in the Rhineland case to no response at all, when even the smallest response would have led to German retreat.)

NOT the ostensible reason: the possibility of no response if the president were dead or incapacitated (Ike); or likewise, if the intermediate commanders were killed or out of communications (Pacific).

The real worry was what might happen (or not happen) if the president and his civilian advisors and subordinates were alive and determined to be in command! The military wanted to assure that he/they could not **lock up** the response system, precluding the possibility of an “insubordinate” but necessary “fast reaction” (no time to consult the president).

Thus, my concern that a low-level subordinate, a pilot or unit or base commander, might take it on himself to attack (whether as a “rogue” or more likely, a conscientious and aggressive small-unit leader)—judging from *my own* fantasies and instincts as a Marine

lieutenant—first expressed in a memo at RAND in 1958 and investigated as a real possibility in the Pacific in 1959-60, really did apply to the highest levels of military command vis-à-vis the President and civilian control. (The prospective inhibitions of a civilian president with respect to use of nuclear weapons were foreseeable enough; just like the inhibitions of the Tsar against general mobilization, provoking his cousin “Willy.”) And the need for *fast*, almost instantaneous, overriding of those inhibitions in the case of possible nuclear war (or defeat in Europe)—either by persuading the president within minutes, or *bypassing him* (Ike, JFK).

Now, no one ever actually said to me, nor did I see anything in writing, that military commanders or staff at any level had discussed or planned to override a presidential decision (if he were alive and in communication.)

But the contempt for civilian authority, distrust of it, and sometimes resentment and rage at specific decisions or specific officials, was commonly demonstrated. And that was especially true with respect to McNamara (McElroy had simply been bypassed, and even Gates was kept in the dark, e.g. about the JSCP). (Looking ahead, remember the JCS spying on Kissinger in 1969-71). And McNamara’s “whiz kids,” especially Enthoven. (They didn’t know much about me, the author of the hateful “questions”).

As for JFK: he had backed off of a commitment of troops to Laos in early 1961; forbidden and then refused the use of tactical air in Cuba, even to save the Bay of Pigs invades from death or imprisonment!; rejected combat units in Vietnam; been weak in his confrontation with Khrushchev in Vienna; and backed up McNamara in rejecting the B-70. All this in his first year!

Worse came in 1962: he chose blockade over air attack in the Missile Crisis, refused to respond when a U-2 was shot down—against his earlier promises—and then failed to invade Cuba, when all preparations and excuse were in place! (Coups climate!) Then, the pressure for a CTB, and negotiation for a PTB!

JFK himself discussed just what lead to a coup, a Seven Days in May. (Consider the reality of the clearance system in that book, keeping a conspiracy from the president—though with a leak. And the desire to protect the country from a weakling president making dangerous agreements with the Soviets.) It would take, he thought, a series of provocations of the military, thwarting them or showing weakness: **like** the Bay of Pigs...(and I think this discussion was before the Cuban Missile Crisis! Check!)

I myself thought there was a coup atmosphere after that, at least in the Air Force circles I was in touch with. (I should read the coup parts of Jim Douglas’ book after all; it convinces most readers, including, apparently, Sorensen. Ask Robert). (Did they guess, after all, his actual intent—in my opinion—to get out of Vietnam in 1965? Without ever saying it explicitly—contrary to PDS et al—he did give them more than a hint with his orders for reductions and even withdrawal “on the assumption of success”, that he might withdraw whatever happened: as he and McNamara actually intended, without telling the military.)

Even Ike had shocked the military in an actual crisis, especially the Air Force, by drawing back from the use of nuclear weapons to break the Chinese Communist artillery blockade against Quemoy, and by demanding plans for initial non-nuclear options. (Leading to some deceptive communications from Kuter about the feasibility of this). Perhaps also by failing to intervene, with troops or even nuclear weapons, at Dienbienphu (though Ridgeway didn't want to do this. But Radford? Who sided with USAF? Was he from carrier air?)

But here I'm not talking about an actual coup, but about their determination, I suspect, to have the physical ability to (and to the extent possible, the preparation in advance, in terms of plans, deployment and actual delegated authorization, which they were always asking for! And for commitment to use nucs, as in Laos, or earlier in the Taiwan Straits.

Truman had been determined to keep that decision in his own hands, away from "some dashing shavetail" (like me!) That led to the "control by the AEC (?)" civilians, gradually transferred to the military. That consideration was the point of it: a potential difference of opinion/value/priority/perspective about the use of nuclear weapons, between the civilians and the president, on the one hand, and lower-level unit commanders or the high military command, on the other. There was indeed reason to foresee this difference, in a crisis! (And see the Cuban Missile Crisis.)

(note that my own initial thoughts about this, in 1958—one year out of the Marine Corps! And the Suez crisis! And Hungary!—had to do with the "shavetails" like me, and the problem of authentication codes. I hadn't yet encountered the high command, nor worried about them.)

My worry about delegation to CINCs, initially, was that it would go down to lower commanders and ultimately to small-unit commanders, as at Kunsan, or even to pilots. (Authentication issue: could such a unit not only decide to go, but *take other units with them, by passing the authentication code and the Go?* Answer, yes: and that was true not only for a Gen. Buck D. Ripper, in Strangelove, but for the pilot in Strangelove who believes that he is intended to go, or who is seized with the belief at his lower level that the US must go.

(See the aim of catalytic war by Aum Shinrykyo! Or Manson, Helter Skelter! Or the craziness of the Weathermen. OR the Norwegian terrorist, a couple of months ago, planning on this for years! Or Osama Bin Laden! (Or the neo-cons and Bush, with their expectations of the results of invading Iraq: a contagion of democracy and Israel-loving in the Middle East!) (Or the economic theories of the Tea Party and the Republicans and bankers, on "creating jobs" and getting out of the recession and reducing deficits by making the rich richer and the poor, poorer in the middle of a recession).

Just, at first, to get locks on the individual or small-unit weapons, **I wanted PALs on weapons**: see my discussions with Jack Carne, on both the authentication problem and on the weapons. Discussions with Eldridge, Marv Stern. **And the military didn't want**

those locks; and managed to avoid them, for SAC and for Polaris. Though we did, supposedly at least, manage to get them on tactical weapons and (?) on weapons assigned to our allies, Germans, Turks... (See Steinbrunner on the German situation).

But then, as I became aware of PACOM plans, I wanted the president to be able to decide **not to attack: a) cities; especially on an escalatory strike, and in the initial wave of a preemptive or retaliatory strike, preferably ever, holding them under threat (for prewar and intrawar deterrence by reserve forces: I hoped, never to be attacked; b) China.**

Withholding these—I hoped, indefinitely—in both preemptive attacks and retaliatory attacks, could—without increasing any risks to the US or its allies—save hundreds of millions lives that would otherwise be massacred by the Air Force and Navy in any large nuclear whoever started it. (Actually, it would have averted nuclear winter, and saved humanity and other forms of complex life from extinction, in the Northern Hemisphere and perhaps globally).

There was **no** real rationale for the plans that doomed these populations **other** than the Air Force/LeMay/Power conviction from their own murderous operations in WWII that killing civilians was the key to victory; and the desire of the Navy (and PACAF) to attack China in any large war, along with the JCS/Republican right to destroy the Chinese Communist regime if the occasion arose, in punishment for Korea and for being Communist (and Chinese). (Like Bush/Cheney's and the neo-cons desire to overthrow Saddam and occupy Iraq if the occasion arose, as it did after 9-11 and the GWOT).

To protect these populations—Chinese, and city-dwellers in the Soviet Union (and all those threatened by fallout from these attacks: oddly, in retrospect, I didn't specifically address the issue of general ground-bursts, which the Navy noted but didn't move to change, nor did McNamara! That really **would** be interfering with operations, though hardly a "detail" in terms of the objective which **I** specified in the BNSP, that the US did not intend to hold the populations of the Sino-Soviet Bloc responsible (or hostage) for the policies or decisions of their leaders)...

(What about our own allies, and neutrals! Even I and McNamara did not really address the fallout problem, which we knew about, let alone the nuclear winter problem, which we didn't. What would McNamara have done if he had known of this? Apparently the Soviets studied it and recognized it long before we did, in the Seventies. **Why didn't they tell us, for Christ's sake?! One more instance of the adversary knowing something he should have told us, for his own sake!**)

Again: to protect these populations—to have a real **chance** that they would not be destroyed, at least automatically or inevitably, in a nuclear war—it was necessary not only

(a) to change the plans, to allow for "withhold," but

(b) to keep the president alive, or civilian (?) centralized authority alive—someone who shared his values and perspective, not LeMay or his subordinate.

(It seemed infeasible to “sell” the military on the thought that the cities should **never** be hit, even after our own cities had been destroyed; at least, I didn’t even try to do that (despite the Air Force early articles on “No need to hit cities to win wars”—Leghorn, Walkowicz? But that presumed initiative) or China, even after the US might have been disastrously weakened by an exchange with the SU (see Kivette on this). But it was hard for them totally to dismiss the logic of holding the cities under threat, as hostages to perhaps avert attacks on our own, or at least, to end the war on “our terms”, especially since when they wouldn’t admit—even Burke!—that there would be no remaining Soviet forces to coerce, in 1959-63 (ignoring threat to Europe: but if I had taken that into account, **I could very well have based the need for a coercive strategy on that! It was the ONLY way to protect Europe, under any circumstances! That WAS the logic of the Athens speech in 1962, against the French nuclear force’s independence.**) Yes, it was unlikely to work, under any circumstances; but it was the **only** possible protection for Europe. We might not have wanted the Europeans to dwell on that reality!

12:19 PM: 2250 words since 10:37. Two breaks at 25 minutes, to do exercises, of about 6-7 minutes. No breakfast yet. ¼ Ritalin.

12:27 PM

c) Moreover, if the cities were to be threatened by reserve forces, there had to be a corresponding centralized authority in the Soviet Union to receive these threats (with communications with the US!) and with the control capability and communications to order his surviving forces to STOP. (Did they have the ability to do that, any more than we did at the time? More important, would they conceivably have had the communications surviving, after our attacks, to convey that order? Very unlikely! So this approach was basically infeasible, **even though** it was the only way to save Europe, and, if there were surviving Soviet strategic weapons, to protect the US from having to suffer attacks from all of them, or all that were not destroyed by our “hunter-killer” B-70’s or B-1’s. (Did Kaufmann actually support, explicitly, the B-70, for this role? Contrary to RAND analyses and recommendations? No wonder some in the Air Force liked him: despite Power’s disgust at the idea of sparing cities. LeMay allegedly gave more attention to him: was this because it favored the B-70? (Kaufmann was a true “defense intellectual,” in the real sense, not the Chomsky ideal: a servant of power, who provided rationales for what the powers wanted to do—although he did try to avoid their worst instincts).

That meant sparing Moscow from initial attacks: the worst heresy possible, anathema, and not only to SAC but to every command that planned to lay a bomb on Moscow! (A total change of plans! Did it **ever** get reflected in the plans? Would any civilian in Washington actually know? Or even any military in the Pentagon?) As WWK said, there was no attention given to ending the war, let alone stopping it or restraining it during the war.

As critics noted, it was crazy to think there was any real chance that any of this would actually work in a large nuclear war; nor that it provided a basis for a surprise attack **or an escalatory attack**.

(At some point, I've got to get analytical enough to mention that there is no accepted term for this attack—it's not really "preemptive" or "preventive" or "retaliatory", though it is misleadingly and ambiguously comprehended under these categories—which was actually not only our main threat and purpose shaping the forces but was the most likely way that nuclear war might still occur, though preemptive was second, **thanks** to our insistence on preserving an escalatory first-strike posture!)

But that didn't (quite) mean that there was no point in preparing for it, or talking about it. It was the only way to make either "preemption" or escalation to a first strike look worth considering, possibly justifiable on the **chance** and gamble that this might work, might alleviate resulting damage from the exchange. And for this threat to have some effect, it didn't have to be the case the Americans actually did believe that this coercive strategy would be effective; they just had to look as if they **might** believe this, based not only on their words but on their procurement, development, deployment.

Well, let me take this back. "No cities" and coercion and continuing centralized authority wasn't quite necessary to worry the Soviets that we might escalate or preempt. They could recognize that the Air Force, irrationally (perhaps like their own commanders! I need to check the NatSecArch reports on their thinking), believed in hitting cities in nuclear war without regard for the consequences. That was actually the case, after all!

Still, the nutty idea of intrawar coercion—declared by McNamara at Athens and Ann Arbor (and suggested by me in my proposed lecture to Khrushchev by JFK in October, 1961—not used in my Gilpatric speech)—**could** have reinforced these fears. I don't know at this point (see need to check Archives) whether the Soviets ever took these seriously. They did, however, invest enormous expense in underground shelters for their own command structure. (Did they ever entertain the thought of possible not destroying our own undergrounds? Weren't their large warheads intended for doing that?) But was that for intrawar control or just to save their own lives and postwar control?) (Was there **any** reality to the extensive civil defense plans—as in the Moscow subway—supposed by Goure?) (There was in China!)

Actually, all of this was just as infeasible as the whole idea of offensive counterforce, after about 1965. Perhaps this was another reason the military dragged its feet and really resisted the idea of "limited nuclear options" pressed by HAK and Schlesinger, along with the fact that they wouldn't have liked the idea even if it **were** feasible.

Still, my own motives in pressing it (and it wasn't hard to make it look preferable to, or less crazy than, the actual plans and operations, if it could be made feasible: **and the military didn't like to admit that it really wasn't feasible, or the reasons for this: at least, I don't think they did spell this out**) were:

1) to “allow” PAL’s to be put on weapons, instead of universal delegation: and this could only be made to look safe (from the point of view of deterrence, or fast response for damage-limiting) if there were assurance of the survival of centralized command (which didn’t exist in 1960);

2) Given the survivability of centralized command (by someone) you didn’t need delegation even to CINCs, which I feared would lead to universal delegation, with its dangers of mistaken or rogue attacks. (I didn’t realize that Ike had actually accepted the latter, and JFK (and LBJ?) had continued this).

3) Again, given survivability of centralized command (and especially if you allowed this in Moscow) there was the possibility of a coercive strategy, which allowed the president to **exclude cities and China** from initial attacks (and perhaps later), for damage-limiting purposes (and allegedly, to make threats of escalation more credible: which was not my priority)(in early 1961, I didn’t even think it was relevant: I didn’t think it had any practical credibility, assuming Soviet parity if not superiority).

I think China did go off the ops plans for initial attacks, at least for a couple of years. Though I saw somewhere in the Archives that it was back, by 1969! And apparently the cities too, if they **ever** went off; at least, Nixon was confronted with “smallest” options involving 90 million dead! After all, it was always possible for planners to designate DGZs for “military” targets near or within cities, and hard for others to discover this. And Nixon did have cities per se taken off the official targeting, apparently to comply with the Genocide Convention, which he finally signed. (Even though Brzezinski, under Carter, actually called for “ethnic” targeting against Russians—the bane of his Polish ancestors—which was explicitly genocidal!)

1:10 PM break for some breakfast/lunch, and treadmill. 1124 words since 12:27